

Keeping the world turning: Mapping care work across different settings

Educational Material

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The project is implemented by:

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

Care work refers to all those tasks that go into sustaining people and the places they live and work in. It therefore concerns a very broad range of types of work that is carried out across many different social spheres, as well as in what is often not considered directly social – i.e. natural spaces which also need to be maintained so that we can sustain ourselves. During the COVID pandemic, attention was brought to a few key areas of care work: especially the home and the hospital. Various reports started to document the amount of time women spent on unpaid care and housework – many times more than men.

This attention helped to spark some public debate about the invisibilised and unrecognised nature of care work, as done overwhelmingly by women. In this workshop, participants will think about the many spaces in which care work occurs and the value, both monetary and not, given to different types of care and care worker.

TARGET AUDIENCE, TYPES OF ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Target Audience

Undergraduate and postgraduate university students in the social and natural sciences

Activities

- Presentations
- Group discussions
- Mapping activity
- Film screening

Objectives

- To introduce participants to key concepts and debates on reproductive (ie caring) labour
- To provide participants with analytical tools for understanding care work intersectionally
- To enable participants to identify the diverse types of care work that occur within and beyond the home
- To encourage participants to think critically about the ways in which diverse types of care work are/not valued

Outcomes

- Participants will be able to articulate an understanding of the interlocking oppressions at play in the organisation and valuing of care work
- Participants will become familiar with feminist thinking on care work
- Participants will acquire analytic tools for examining care work from different perspectives

INTRODUCTION AND ICEBREAKER (20MIN)

- Introduce the workshop's topic; schedule and approach (5 mins)
- An icebreaker for participants to introduce themselves and their relation with care work: who do you care for and who cares for you? (15 mins)

ACTIVITY 1: FILM SCREENING AND GROUP DISCUSSION ON CARE WORK (40 MINS)

- Inputs: This activity is based around a screening of ProGender's Keeping the World Turning short film (14 mins).

Step 1: Introduction (5min)

Introduce the film by saying that we are going to explore diverse aspects and experiences of care work. Elicit participants' thoughts on how care work is usually represented in the media? What types of work are usually portrayed as care work?

Step 2: Screen the film (15min)

Step 3: Discussion (20min)

Facilitate a discussion that starts from the film and its representation of care work and goes on to address care work more generally.

Key questions to explore in this moderated discussion:

- What types of care work are represented in this film?
- Who does care work and how? What are the differences between the two pairs of care workers? What factors contribute to these differences?
- How are these different types of care work and care worker situated with respect to power relations of class, gender, race, sexuality, ability?
- How did COVID impact those in the film?
- What types of care work and care worker are missing from the film?

ACTIVITY 2: MAPPING CARE WORK IN DIFFERENT SETTINGS (60MIN)

Step 1: Introduction (5min)

In this activity, participants examine care work in greater detail, by working in groups to map the tasks and the value associated with care in different social settings. The moderator can either assign the groups a space which is meaningful to the group (i.e. a library, park, school), or ask participants to come up with the spaces themselves. The idea here is to broaden the scope in terms of where care work is understood as taking place, and to encourage thinking about the interdependences that are critical to the care of people and places. Clarifying these ideas with concrete examples that resonate with participants is a good way of introducing the activity.

Step 2: Mapping care tasks (20min)

Break participants into groups and ask them to note down a list of tasks (whether paid or unpaid) that happen in the space they will work on, which enable both the care of the people in that space– and/or of the place itself. Ask them also to note down who does these tasks. Encourage them to go beyond the more visible and recognised tasks to those which are often invisible.

The value of care (10 mins)

Ask the groups to revisit their lists and note down which tasks are paid and which are not. Ask them also to think about the social value attached to each task: is it seen as something useful/necessary/difficult/easy/skilled etc?

Group Discussion (25 mins)

Have the groups briefly present their discussions to the whole group.

Facilitate a whole group discussion on the value, monetary and not, given to different types of care work.

Key questions to explore in this moderated discussion:

- Which kinds of tasks are valued socially and monetarily, and which not?

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- What is their value in terms of 'keeping the world turning'?
- How might this distribution of value be organised differently? Why?

Step 3: Closing (10min)

Recap the day's main insights; ask participants for feedback on activities they most/least enjoyed, ask if they learned anything that surprised them.

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Norway grants

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